



## Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

204 East Academy St. ♦ P.O. Box 771 ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

April 28, 2010

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the Training Room of the County Office Building at 725 McDowell Road, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Members present were Hal Johnson, Mac Whatley, Robyn Hankins, Bill Johnson and Bill Ivey. Robby Davis, Fran Andrews, Lynne Qualls and Warren Dixon were absent.

### **Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2010**

*On a motion of B. Johnson, seconded by Whatley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 24, 2010, as presented.*

### **Public Hearing – Landmark Designation - Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site**

Chairman Johnson welcomed Mt. Shepherd Retreat Center representative Kent Shrader to the meeting and asked Commission member Bill Johnson to share the history of the Mt. Shepherd Pottery Site. Mr. Johnson is past chairman and a current member of the Mt. Shepherd camp's board of directors.

Mr. Johnson stated that Randolph County is fortunate to have this site which identifies local pottery history. It is part of the Uwharrie Mountains and is the highest peak in Randolph County, sitting 1157 feet above sea level. It has also been the location of the public broadcasting antenna for forty-two years.

Mr. Johnson stated that it was fortunate that there is a written record from three centuries ago describing this area around Mt. Shepherd. He said that a John Lawson was asked by North Carolina's Land Proprietors to do a survey of the interiors of the Carolinas. In February 1701, he and a small group spent three days in the Keyauwee Town, a village of friendly Indians, which was located in the Caraway Creek valley facing Mt. Shepherd. His report was published in England and settlers began immigrating to North Carolina. Among those immigrants settling here sometime between 1775 and 1800 was a pioneer potter who built perhaps the county's first pottery manufacturing site, or one of the earliest. This site sits eight miles west of Asheboro, via Highway 64. Originally, it was named "Shepherd's Mountain" after the early settler and owner, John Shepherd, who was granted the tract in 1771. The European settlers began calling it Mount Shepherd.

Mr. Johnson shared that the historic pottery site was accidentally discovered a few years after the tract became a camp. The first camp caretakers, Walter and Evelyn Farlow, moved into the caretaker's house in 1963. In 1969, their sons, Lee and Geoffrey, found pieces of broken pottery while playing on the grounds near the house. They realized these pieces were not recent and brought the site to the attention of Seagrove potters Dorothy and Walter Auman. The Aumans recognized the importance of this site and helped to investigate it. In 1971, the Aumans formed the NC Historical Potters Exploration, Inc.

(NCHPE) to research the site. In October 1971, J.H. Kelly and A.R. Mountford from Stok-On-Trent Museum in Staffordshire, England, were hired by NCHPE to conduct preliminary archaeological investigations at the Mt. Shepherd pottery site. They dug three test trenches that indicated the site was well preserved and recommended that more intensive investigations be undertaken. Kelly stated, "This is an extremely important ceramic site from which much information about the colonization of North Carolina and the development of American ceramics can be got."

In the spring of 1974, the Aumans contacted archaeologist Alain Outlaw, and he was hired from the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission to conduct additional excavations at the site. He excavated two major areas of the site that summer. The next year, a grant from the Bicentennial Commission made it possible to rehire Outlaw to conduct an on-site field school with the students of Dr. David McLean of St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Louisburg, North Carolina.

The Mount Shepherd pottery site has provided a wealth of information about early historic pottery making in North Carolina, especially as it might relate to the Moravian Wachovia Community. (Wachovia was the area settled by Moravians in what is now Forsyth County, North Carolina, US. Of the six eighteenth century Moravian "Villages of the Lord" established in Wachovia, today, the town of Bethania, North Carolina and city of Winston-Salem exist within the historic Wachovia tract. The Moravian Archives in Winston-Salem has a map of the original Wachovia tract, showing the approximate locations of the first six Moravian congregations and the approximate current boundaries of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County) Outlaw's excavations revealed the remains of a five-flued circular kiln and several structures associated with the pottery manufacturing operations. A large quantity and wide variety of pottery objects were recovered, including stove tiles, smoking pipes, utilitarian earthenware, and decorated slipware production. Outlaw, using comparative dating from dated similar design and styled pottery, gave an arbitrary time period for the pottery site as between 1773 and 1800. Also, 18<sup>th</sup> century nails and glass and several dated old coins were found at the site.

In 1975, Outlaw stated that the Mount Shepherd site is "extremely important since no substantial eighteenth century kiln remains have been unearthed at either nearby Bethabara or Salem, which were both Moravian pottery manufacturing centers in the second half of the 1700's." Outlaw concluded that when the site is further fully explored, the site would be of "added significance in gaining a better understanding of the regional folk pottery tradition in the North Carolina Piedmont."

Other conclusions drawn by Outlaw, as he completed his second summer of work, were stated in a Randolph Guide article in 1975. The unknown potter was a master potter who may have had apprentices assisting him. This master potter, if not German, had "Germanic tendencies" or influences by the Moravian potters of Old Salem and Bethabara.

Due to the lack of funds, the site was never fully excavated and examined. After the summer work of 1975, the excavated areas were covered and filled with sand, and natural growth cover was allowed to return over the site. A temporary security fence was also installed to help protect the examined areas.

For several years, the identity of the potter at the historic Mount Shepherd site remained a complete mystery. Then in May, 1980, L. McKay Whatley, in an extensive detailed research article, entitled "The Mount Shepherd Pottery: Correlating Archaeology and History" published in the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, made a compelling case that a Philip Jacob Meyer, apprenticed by the Salem Potter Gottfried Aust, was the master potter at the Mount Shepherd site between 1793 and 1799.

The significance of the Mount Shepherd pottery site was further recognized in 1980 when it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeologist Alain C. Outlaw wrote the National Register nomination in 1975.

In 2007, a small grant from the North Carolina Archaeological Society allowed the consolidation and curation of the artifact collection housed at the Mount Shepherd Retreat Center. This led to new studies of the material that was sponsored by the Wheatland Foundation, Inc., Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In the 2009 published book, Ceramics In America 2009, Alain C. Outlaw wrote a full chapter entitled "The Mount Shepherd Pottery Site, Randolph County, North Carolina." In his latest written comments on the Mount Shepherd site, Outlaw highlights the continued significance of the 1974-75 Mount Shepherd excavation. He states, "The excavation of the Mount Shepherd site represents the most comprehensive documentation of a late-eighteenth-century earthenware pottery in the piedmont region of North Carolina." Outlaw also recognizes the identity of Jacob Meyer as the Mount Shepherd potter and his relationship and his ceramics to the Wachovia potters and styles. "The pottery recovered there offers insights into Jacob Meyer's work and provides clear evidence of his training with Gottfried Aust, Gottlob Krause, and other Wachovia potters."

When recently contacted in 2010, Outlaw stated that although more areas could be excavated at the Mount Shepherd location, a higher priority should be given to protecting the 1974 and 1975 excavated areas. The previous excavation areas should be stabilized against natural erosion and the security fence repaired. The interpretive signage should be upgraded as well. All these measures should be accomplished under the supervision of a professional archaeologist.

Today the Mount Shepherd property of 542 acres not only houses the county's first excavated and earliest pottery manufacturing site, it also houses the Mount Shepherd Retreat Center and Camp. The largest use of this camp is for summer youth and children's camping and ministry activities. Facilities are used year-round for youth and adults and special programs. Facilities and programs are also available for environmental workshops, and other educational activities. Hiking trails, quiet inspirational gatherings, high ropes course and special water related activities are provided.

For over 200 years, the Mount Shepherd property passed through many property owners. The Great Depression often caused ownership of tracts to be lost in foreclosures, and such was the case with the Mount Shepherd tract. In 1939, Delose Hedgecock, a lumber businessman, bought the tract and harvested the timber. On June 2, 1961, Delose Hedgecock and his wife, Mary Lee, donated the tract which is now the Mount Shepherd

Retreat Center, to the High Point District of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. The generous gift of the Hedgecocks made it possible for the Mount Shepherd tract to be developed as a church retreat center and camp for people of all ages.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Whatley, who was part of the archeological dig in the summer of 1975, to elaborate on his article published in the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* in May, 1980.

Mr. Whatley used extensive research of primary sources to establish the strong possibility that the pottery was of a Moravian variety and style, and that a Philip Jacob Meyer was the Master Potter at the Mount Shepherd Site between 1793 and 1799.

Whatley contends that with the initial discovery of the Mount Shepherd pottery site, a strong historical authoritative context was not established employing comparative archaeological analysis of pottery ceramics and primary documentary materials. Too much reliance was made on local and oral traditional history suggesting “that English potters from the Staffordshire district had settled in Randolph in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Because of strong local tradition, it was naturally assumed that the pottery site was linked with English ceramic tradition.” Initially, the Mount Shepherd ceramic finds were not part of any authoritative comparisons.

Whatley said that the significant excavation in the 1960’s and the finds of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Moravian settlement of Bethabara in Forsyth County relates to the two pottery sites of the potter, Gottfried Aust (first established in 1756), and Aust’s former apprentice, Rudolf Christ (operated in the 1780’s). Both potters later worked in the town of Salem, established in 1766, six miles from Bethabara. A thorough analysis of these potters and their style of ceramics provided an authoritative basis of comparison with the Mount Shepherd pottery.

Whatley contends that as the excavation of the Mount Shepherd pottery site proceeded and as more ceramic pieces were discovered, “it became increasingly evident that some relationship existed between the potter working at Mount Shepherd and the various Moravian potters working at Salem and Bethabara.” Whatley cited various examples of similar comparisons between the Mount Shepherd and the Forsyth Moravian ceramics. “The reed-stem tobacco pipes found at Mt Shepherd are very similar to one type found in the kiln waster dump at Aust’s first pottery site in Bethabara. The decorated ware at Mount Shepherd is also extremely similar to Moravian examples. The ‘combed’ and checkered bowls have similar counterparts in Salem production. The slip decoration of the plates is very closely related to Moravian examples.”

The existence of the stove tiles found at the Mount Shepherd site, “the Minuteman” and “the Dragoon,” bears a striking connection with Moravian communities. Although the subject matters of the tiles from the two locations are different, Whatley contends that the use and the existence of these stove tiles “was almost completely limited to Moravian settlements in 18<sup>th</sup> century America.”

Other ceramic finds suggested both a connection to Moravian pottery and to the Moravian master potter Gottfried Aust. Aust established a standard pricing code for

pottery pieces that he scratched on the bottoms with a Roman numeral code. The potter at Mount Shepherd used a similar pricing code on the pottery bottoms. Whatley contends that this similarity strongly suggests a working relationship between Aust and the Mount Shepherd potter.

Who was this mystery potter? Whatley went to great length with research and documentation to establish the identity of the Mount Shepherd potter. He completed an extensive deed search to establish the identity of the property owner of this site during the 1790's. Initial attempts and inquiries were directed at this question by several individuals without success. Plotting the 1790's properties, and locating land grant records, Whatley identifies the pottery site almost in the center of a 100-acre tract and identifies its owner. This same tract was granted by the State of North Carolina in 1793 to a "Jacob Myers." Though he may have been at Mount Shepherd before 1793, Randolph County records confirm his presence in the county from October 1793 to November 1799.

Whatley then identified a Moravian apprentice named "Philip Jacob Meyer" who worked in the pottery shop of Gottfried Aust. Philip Jacob Meyer, also called Jacob Meyer, Jr., was born October 25, 1771, in Bethabara. His family soon moved to the Salem community. In January, 1786, Jacob, Jr. was apprenticed to Gottfried Aust to learn the 'pottery trade.' After Aust left for Philadelphia in 1788, his pottery shop was to be run by Jacob Meyer and another apprentice. Due to unacceptable behavior, Meyer was banished from the Salem community in 1789. He later joined his brother-in-law, Gottlob Krause, and worked in his pottery shop in Bethabara. He was married in 1791. In 1792, his only child was born in Bethania. Jacob Meyer does not appear in the Moravian records again until his death at Bethabara, September 22, 1801.

Mr. Whatley feels strongly that the "Jacob Meyer" apprenticed to Gottfried Aust in 1786 at the Moravian Salem pottery shop was the same "Jacob Myers" who owned the Mount Shepherd pottery site and was its potter from about 1793 to about 1799. In his article, Whatley stated "Though we cannot state unequivocally that the Mount Shepherd potter was the former Aust apprentice, Jacob Meyer, there is an extremely high probability that this is the case, when the documentary records of Randolph County and the Moravian Archives are compared, the two are found to be complementary, not contradictory." Whatley also concludes that Jacob Meyer's work, his practices, and his ceramic productions as discovered at the Mount Shepherd archeological pottery site closely resemble that of Gottfried Aust and Gottlob Krause, his brother-in-law, of the Bethabara and Salem Moravian communities in Forsyth County.

Mr. Ivey stated that the characteristics of the Moravians would validate Mr. Whatley's article.

Kent Shrader, who has been Retreat Director since 1989, stated that upon his arrival to the Mt. Shepherd camp, Bill Johnson showed him around the facility. Mr. Shrader was amazed at the pottery site and the history that is held within that acreage. He has incorporated pottery into camp programs, which include the making and firing process. He stated that he would like to see additional programs open to the public that would let them "get their hands dirty" and link the citizens to the history at Mt. Shepherd. Mr. Shrader stated that they have as many as 718 campers a year.

At 3:15 p.m., the Commission adjourned to a duly advertised public hearing to consider a historic landmark designation request. Chairman Johnson opened the public hearing and closed it before taking action.

*On a motion of B. Johnson, seconded by Whatley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the resolution of support for the Randolph County Commissioner's designation of the historic Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site as a historic landmark, as follows:*

***Resolution Recommending Local Historic Landmark Designation  
Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site  
c. 1775-1800***

***WHEREAS***, Chapter 160A, Article 19, Part 3C of the North Carolina General Statutes provides for the designation of local historic landmarks; and

***WHEREAS***, the Randolph County Board of Commissioners has appointed the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, having the authority to exercise, all powers and duties given it by the Randolph County Historic Preservation Ordinance; and

***WHEREAS***, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission has taken into consideration all information contained in the Historic Landmark Designation Report for the Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site, and

***WHEREAS***, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, has been given the opportunity to review the Landmark Designation Report to make comment concerning the requisite historical significance and integrity; and

***WHEREAS***, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission conducted the required public hearing, having published legal notices with mailings to adjoining property owners; and

***WHEREAS***, the Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980; and

***WHEREAS***, the Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site represents the most comprehensive documentation of a late eighteenth century earthenware pottery in the Piedmont region of North Carolina; and

***WHEREAS***, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission finds that the Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site meets the following specific criteria outlined in the adopting Ordinance establishing the Commission: (1) Critical part of Randolph County's heritage by having value as an example of the cultural, historic, and social heritage of the county; and

***WHEREAS***, the property is more specifically described as follows: The Mt. Shepherd Archeological Pottery Site is located on a 531.07 acre tract owned by the High Point District of the United Methodist Church; PIN# 7713617423; more specifically designated within this tract as a 2.60 acre site beginning on the left where the property line crosses at the dead end of SR 1686; then proceeding adjacent to and west of the private road known as Mt. Shepherd Road Extension for approximately 240 feet. The site delineation then bears to the left at the beginning of graveled road maintenance and camp driveway, proceeding north-westward for approximately 390 feet; the site then runs south approximately 473 feet along western property line; then running eastward approximately 298 feet along the

southern property line, ending at the beginning point and encompassing an area of approximately 2.60 acres; and

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED***, this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2010, that the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation commission approves the request for Local Landmark designation, and recommends to the Randolph County Board of Commissioners that the Mt. Shepherd Archaeological Pottery Site, c. 1775-1800, be designated as a Local Historic Landmark.

### **RCC Presentation**

Chairman Johnson welcomed RCC students Jamie Kellis, Bryan Kennedy and Deana Ramirez.

Chairman Johnson stated that the whole RCC class spent a lot of time on the earlier proposed logos and their time is appreciated, but the Commission members liked parts of all, but not just one as a whole. Instructor Ms. Shaw contacted Chairman Johnson and inquired if the seniors could take the project a step further and do more research on what is envisioned. Members met with the students in two smaller groups to go over the likes and dislikes and gather other ideas.

The students then presented variations on two earlier logos and two new logos based on comments from the smaller group meetings that were held with Commission members.

- Redesigned artwork from an earlier design featuring a governmental look:



- Redesigned artwork from an earlier design featuring the likes of the 1909 Courthouse roof:



- Inspiration from the 1909 Courthouse ceiling tiles with a rectangular format:



- Different interpretation of the same ceiling tiles with a circular configuration:



Ms. Shaw stated that the colors or images can be altered on any presentation at the request of the Commission. She added that the last two take a significant part of the 1909 Courthouse where meetings would be held when renovations are completed and that they could represent any designated landmark.

The Commission members present asked if variations discussed during the presentation could be available before they make a final decision with the whole Commission. The students and Ms. Shaw stated they would be happy to provide those.

Chairman Johnson told the students that the Commission would review the new presentations at the May meeting and get back with them on the outcome. The Commission wished them well as they graduate on May 12 and thanked them for all their hard work and hoped that this project has helped them in their studies.

### **Other Business**

Chairman Johnson stated that the Randolph County Board of Commissioners will be setting a public hearing date for the Mt. Shepherd Pottery Site landmark designation at their meeting on May 3 and could consider this item on June 7 at 4:30 p.m. for landmark designation.



**Adjournment**

*At 3:15 p.m., on motion of Ivey, seconded by B. Johnson, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn.*

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Hal Johnson, Chairman

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Amanda Varner,  
Clerk to the HLPC